

Illinois Dietetic Association



Illinois Health Care Reform Implementation Council

Public Testimony, December 3, 2010

The Illinois Dietetic Association applauds the Illinois Governor's Health Care Reform Implementation Council in gathering public input on this important issue. We appreciate the opportunity to share our thoughts and priorities. Registered Dietitians (Illinois Licensed Dietitians/Nutritionists) are part of the health care community providing first-hand knowledge of the multiple factors that influence nutritional status and the overall health of our residents. The Affordable Care Act, and subsequent Health Care Reform in Illinois, offer a rare opportunity to look anew at the needs of Illinois residents and determine how best to deliver care.

The key strategies identified by the Health Care Reform Implementation Council for improving access and health care delivery offer potential for health care professionals to work together to improve health care for everyone. Licensed, Registered Dietitians are uniquely qualified to work with these strategies including home and community-based service infrastructure and the expansion of prevention and wellness strategies, as well as being included in the expanded group of "other" health care providers serving Medicaid clients.

With obesity and chronic conditions challenging our health care system, data show that medical nutrition therapy (MNT) yields positive results. MNT is linked to improved clinical outcomes and reduced costs related to physician time, medication use and hospital admissions for people with obesity, diabetes and disorders of lipid metabolism, as well as other chronic diseases¹

The University of Virginia School of Medicine² reported that a Registered Dietitian (RD) case management approach to lifestyle care can improve diverse indicators of health, including weight, waist circumference, health-related quality of life, and use of prescription medications among obese persons with type 2 diabetes. These results were seen with a minimal cost of \$350 per year per patient.

Diabetes and obesity are associated with elevated rates of lost productivity and disability. In 2007, people with diabetes lost 15 million days of work due to diabetes, costing the U.S. economy approximately \$2.6 billion.³ A modest-cost, registered dietitian-led lifestyle intervention provided to people with diabetes and obesity was shown to reduce the risk of lost work days by 64.3% and disability days by 87.2%, compared with those receiving usual medical care. For every dollar an employer invests in the lifestyle modification program for employees with diabetes, the employer would see a return of \$2.67 in productivity⁴

Specific guidelines for changes needed for health improvement are readily available and should be used to guide health care reform implementation. The Illinois State Health Improvement Plan offers insight into changes needed in Illinois while documents such as the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010* reiterate many of those recommendations. The current, documented health care needs of the population must be considered in order to reform our health care system in a way that best addresses those needs. As the Health Care Reform Implementation Council determines the next steps in implementing health care reform the Illinois Dietetic Association, with over 3000 members, offers support and assistance. We appreciate your service in this endeavor.

REFERENCES

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